EPI Update for Friday, December 20, 2013 Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE) lowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- Influenza activity increasing in lowa
- The 'gift' that keeps on giving: Norovirus
- Influenza vaccine safety
- Meeting announcements and training opportunities

Influenza activity increasing in Iowa

Influenza activity in Iowa has been upgraded from sporadic to local due to recent increases in flu activity, primarily in the eastern part of the state. This is a strong reminder for those who have not been vaccinated to get their influenza vaccination now. For more information about influenza, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/Cade/Influenza.aspx.

The 'gift' that keeps on giving: Norovirus

In the past week, six separate outbreaks of diarrhea and vomiting have been reported to IDPH, all probably caused by norovirus (laboratory results pending). In addition, anecdotal reports of high levels of diarrheal and vomiting illnesses are being reported from communities around the state.

Please remind everyone to stay home if ill (even if it means missing that holiday party), and not to handle or touch any foods meant for others until at least 48 hours after symptoms resolve. For more information on noroviruses, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/idph_universalhelp/main.aspx?system=IdphEpiManual&context=Norovirus_factsheet

Influenza vaccine safety

Every year 5 to 20% of Americans get the flu and over 200,000 are hospitalized. From 1976 to 2006 estimates were 3,000 to 49,000 flu-associated deaths per year in the U.S. The best protection against influenza illness (and the subsequent hospitalizations and deaths) is to receive an annual flu vaccine.

Over many years, safety monitoring of seasonal inactivated influenza vaccine (IIV) has not detected a link to Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS). However, any risk of GBS from the current vaccine would be no more than 1 or 2 cases per million people vaccinated. This is much lower than the risk of severe influenza disease and death, which can be prevented by vaccination. In addition, studies suggest that the risk of developing GBS after having influenza infection is higher than the potential risk after vaccination.

Guillain-Barre syndrome is a disorder in which a person's immune system attacks its own nerve cells causing nerve damage and sometimes paralysis. In the United States 3,000-6,000 people will develop GBS yearly regardless of receiving a vaccine. Most people who develop GBS do so within days or weeks of a diarrheal or respiratory illness such as influenza. Risk factors for GBS include *Campylobacter jejuni* infection, age 50

years or greater, recent infections such as Epstein-Barr virus or cytomegalovirus infections.

The CDC and IDPH recommend yearly influenza vaccines for all eligible persons over 6 months of age.

Meeting announcements and training opportunitiesNone

There will be no Epi Update published next week because of the Christmas Holiday.

Have healthy and happy holiday weeks (and be careful on the icy and snowy roads!)

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